



# Northeast Indian Fisheries Commission FY 1995 Activities

## Introduction

"We, the Indians of the Pacific Northwest, recognize that our fisheries are a basic and important natural resource and of vital concern to the Indians of this state, and that the conservation of this natural resource is dependent upon effective and progressive management. We further believe that by unity of action, we can best accomplish these things, not only for the benefit of our own people but for all the people of the Pacific Northwest."

-- *Preamble to the Constitution of the  
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission*

The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) was created in 1974 by the treaty Indian tribes in western Washington as a result of the U.S. v. Washington litigation that affirmed fishing rights reserved by the tribes in treaties signed with the federal government in the 1850s.

The commission's role is to assist the tribes in conducting orderly and biologically sound fisheries and to provide member tribes with a single, unified voice on fisheries management and conservation issues. Member tribes are Nisqually, Squaxin Island, Puyallup, Jamestown S'Klallam, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Lower Elwha S'Klallam, Skokomish, Swinomish, Sauk-Suiattle, Upper Skagit, Tulalip, Makah, Stillaguamish, Muckleshoot, Suquamish, Nooksack, Lummi, Quinault and Quileute.

The tribes select representatives who develop policy and provide direction to NWIFC staff. The commissioners elect a chairman, vice-chairman and treasurer. The commission's executive director supervises the staff that implements the policies and fisheries management activities approved by the commissioners. The NWIFC em-

ploys about 50 full-time employees in its Administration, Fishery Services, Habitat Services and Information and Education Services divisions.

NWIFC administration includes the executive director, director of finance and administration, fishery and legislative policy analysts and clerical and accounting departments.

The Fishery Services Division supports and promotes the fishery programs of member tribes by providing technical assistance, coordinating management programs and representing tribal management policies. The program is comprised of the Fishery Management and Planning Division, Quantitative Services Division and Enhancement Services Division, and provides services ranging from harvest management planning to database management and fish health.

The Habitat Services Division provides coordination, representation and technical and policy assistance to member tribes on fish habitat and other environmental issues. In addition, the program coordinates tribal participation in forest management processes and conducts a statewide Coordinated Tribal Water Quality Program, among other programs.

The Information and Education Division provides comprehensive public relations services to member tribes. The division produces news releases, publications and videos, works with the media, coordinates and provides public presentations, develops and staffs educational exhibits at fairs and other events, and responds to numerous information requests from the public, among other activities.

# FY 1995

## Overview

Fiscal Year 1995 was a year of challenge for western Washington treaty Indian tribes and the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

With the re-affirmation late last year of the tribal right to harvest half of the shellfish in western Washington waters, the tribes began the task of implementing their management responsibilities. The effort is proceeding amidst legal challenges of the court-ordered implementation plan and while all parties in the case continue to explore a negotiated settlement in the case.

Another major effort centered on the marbled murrelet, a seabird that occurs in areas of treaty and non-treaty gillnetting, which is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Numerous meetings with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) occurred as part of the formal ESA consultation process to determine the impact of tribal fishing on the bird, and as part of a tribal research program to assess bird distribution, abundance and recruitment. A major research plan was developed, and following the issuance of a biological opinion by the USFWS in July, was implemented during summer and fall of 1995. This study is providing extremely useful information on the distribution of marbled murrelets in marine waters, on total abundance and on the recruitment of juveniles into the population.

A high priority for commission staff in FY-95 was increased participation in the joint tribal/state Wild Stock Restoration Initiative and associated long-range planning. Efforts are currently under way to develop a statewide Wild Salmonid Policy; to develop recovery plans for salmon and steelhead stocks identified as critical in the 1992 stock inventory; to continue work on a comprehensive coho salmon management strategy; and to develop a statewide inventory and assessment of salmonid habitats.

# FY 1995

## Activities Summary

Following is a brief summary of activities by the NWIFC during 1995:

### Fishery Management And Planning Section

The primary objective of the Fishery Management and Planning Section is to provide technical assistance and coordination to member tribes in their annual and long range fishery management planning activities. Activities during FY-95 included:

- ◆ Annual harvest management planning and monitoring;
- ◆ U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty technical assistance;
- ◆ Long-range planning/Wild Stock Restoration Initiative;
- ◆ Endangered Species Act issues;
- ◆ Pacific Fishery Management Council assistance;
- ◆ Regional management assistance;
- ◆ Shellfish management and technical assistance; and
- ◆ Coastal habitat coordination.

## Quantitative Services

Quantitative Services assists tribal fishery management programs by providing relevant data, quantitative tools and analyses, and technical consulting services to tribal and NWIFC projects. Activities in FY-95 included:

- ◆ Providing assistance to tribal policy and technical staff on evaluation of management for chinook and coho salmon;
- ◆ Administering and coordinating the Treaty Indian Catch Monitoring Program. The program provides an agreed-upon harvest database that can provide hard catch statistics critical for fisheries management planning and allocation;
- ◆ Revising the Treaty Fish Ticket data system and conducting training seminars for NWIFC and tribal staff;
- ◆ Providing computer set-up, maintenance, troubleshooting, and consultation services;
- ◆ Providing statistical consulting services for pre-season abundance forecasts and inseason run size update models;
- ◆ Conducting data analysis of fisheries studies and developing study designs;
- ◆ Updating and evaluating fishery management statistical models and databases; and
- ◆ Coordinating the tribal Fishing Identification and Boat Plaque Program.

## Enhancement Services

Enhancement Services provides tribal support services in enhancement planning, hatchery coordination, coded wire tagging, and fish health. Activities in FY-95 included:

- ◆ Coded wire tagging of 3.4 million fish at tribal hatcheries to provide information critical to fisheries management;
- ◆ Fulfilling tribal requests for coded wire tag analysis;

- ◆ Providing fish health services to tribal hatcheries in the areas of juvenile fish health monitoring, disease diagnostics, adult health inspections and vaccine production;
- ◆ Hosting fish culture workshops for tribal hatchery technicians;
- ◆ Compiling tribal fish hatchery information for data exchange agreements and information requests;
- ◆ Providing assistance to tribes in the development and implementation of management and harvest plans for marine mammals; and
- ◆ Representing tribal interests before the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

## U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty Implementation

The Pacific Salmon Treaty of 1985 provides for tribal policy representation at all levels of the Pacific Salmon Commission, which implements the treaty. NWIFC staff are involved in many aspects of the treaty's implementation. Activities in FY-95 included:

- ◆ Facilitating inter-tribal and inter-agency meetings, developing issue papers and analyzing strategies and negotiation options;
- ◆ Informing tribes and policy representatives on issues affected by the treaty implementation process;
- ◆ Serving on the Fraser sockeye and pink, chum, coho, chinook and data sharing technical committees, as well as other committees and work groups and panels;
- ◆ Advising and facilitating development of management regimes by tribal and U.S. Section representatives of the bi-lateral Fraser Panel, which manages fisheries on Fraser River stocks; and
- ◆ Coordinating tribal research and data gathering activities associated with implementation of the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

# Habitat Services Division

The Habitat Services Division provides coordination, representation and technical assistance to member tribes on fish habitat and other environmental issues. The division monitors these issues and acts as an information clearinghouse. Activities in FY-95 included:

- ◆ Coordinating policy and technical level discussions between tribes and federal, state and local governments, and other interested parties;
- ◆ Coordinating, representing and monitoring tribal interests in the Timber/Fish/Wildlife and Water Resources Forum processes, Coordinated Tribal Water Quality and Ambient Monitoring programs, hydropower planning and development committees, Puget Sound management committees and information management committees;
- ◆ Monitoring, analyzing and distributing technical information on habitat-related forums, programs and processes;
- ◆ Serving as a clearinghouse for distribution of environmental information to the tribes necessary for notification, participation and responses to development and planning activities; and
- ◆ Implementing the Salmon and Steelhead Habitat Inventory and Analysis Project.

# Information and Education Services Division

The Information and Education Services Division provides comprehensive public relations and education services to member tribes. Activities in FY-95 included:

- ◆ Producing news releases, newsletters, brochures, reports, curriculums, videos, photographs, exhibits and other materials to inform and educate the public about tribal natural resource management activities and objectives;
- ◆ Producing internal newsletters, background papers and other materials to help keep member tribes informed on topics of interest;
- ◆ Coordinating conferences and meetings;
- ◆ Responding to numerous public requests for information on the tribes and tribal natural resource management activities;
- ◆ Participating in cooperative natural resource education efforts and events with federal and state agencies, environmental organizations and other groups;
- ◆ Maintaining a comprehensive photo/slide/video and newspaper clipping library; and
- ◆ Monitoring legislation and coordinating tribal input.

## For More Information

For more information about the fisheries management activities of the treaty Indian tribes in western Washington please contact the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, 6730 Martin Way E., Olympia, WA 98516; or call (360) 438-1180.